

Netherhall School

Netherhall Road, Maryport, Cumbria, CA15 6NT

Inspection dates

12-13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Boys' achievement lags significantly behind that of girls. Differences in attainment between boys and girls are evident across many subject areas. Weaknesses in literacy skills are holding back the overall level of boys' achievement.
- Although attainment in English is rising, not enough students, particularly boys and low-attaining students, make good or better progress. There is variation in the effectiveness of support provided for students who are in the early stages of reading.
- It is too early to see the impact of recent initiatives to develop literacy across the curriculum. Early intervention in support of those students with weak literacy skills is not consistently effective.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching. For example, not all teaching provides appropriate levels of challenge for all groups of students. In some lessons, too much teacher input slows progress and reduces students' more active involvement in learning.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students respond well to their teachers and very few lessons are disturbed by poor behaviour.
- Bullying is rare and students feel very safe in school. They say that they are well cared for by staff.
- Leadership and management are good. The drive for improvement is very widely shared by staff at all levels. The governing body plays a full and effective role in supporting and challenging the school.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and effective systems are in place to ensure that teaching continues to improve.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to students' achievement, including for students supported through the Pupil Premium. Students achieve well in religious education, in modern foreign languages and in humanities.
- The sixth form is good. Students enjoy their studies and achieve well. Almost all students move on successfully to higher education, training or employment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, of which five were observed jointly with managers from the school. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons in order to sample the quality of teaching provided for some students with special educational needs. In total, nearly 13 hours of teaching were observed.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, with school staff and with representatives from the local authority.
- During the inspection, inspectors took account of 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and to the results of a questionnaire for school staff.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including in relation to the safeguarding of students. They also scrutinised information relating to students' achievement, behaviour and attendance, together with minutes of meetings of the governing body, school planning documents and records of the school's monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Lee Northern, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Patrick Feerick

Additional inspector

Lynne Horton

Additional inspector

Catherine Laing

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Netherhall School is smaller than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium is greater than that seen nationally. Almost all students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is higher than the national average. However, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs, or supported at school action plus, is slightly below the national average.
- The number of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is lower than in most secondary schools.
- The school has specialist status in sport. It has gained a number of awards including the Sports Partnership Mark, the Healthy School's Award and the Careers Advice and Guidance Award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The current headteacher took up his post during the week prior to the beginning of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring all lessons are effective in improving students' literacy skills, including through questioning that deepens their understanding and develops their skills in speaking and listening
 - providing regular opportunities for students' active involvement and greater independence in learning
 - ensuring teaching meets the needs of all groups of students and provides appropriate levels of challenge to help them reach their target grades.
- Improve boys' achievement and the achievement of low-attaining students by:
 - accelerating students' progress in English
 - improving the effectiveness of early intervention in support of students with weak literacy skills and monitoring closely the impact of the support provided
 - ensuring that the support provided for those students in the early stages of reading is consistently effective in meeting their needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is rising and students achieve well in religious education, humanities and in modern foreign languages. Since the time of the previous inspection, actions taken to strengthen weaker teaching and the impact of targeted intervention, particularly in Key Stage 4, have contributed to improvements in overall rates of progress. However, achievement requires improvement because boys achieve noticeably less well than girls. Differences in attainment and progress between boys and girls are evident across many subject areas. In addition, although attainment in English is rising, not enough students, particularly boys and low-attaining students, make good or better progress.
- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average and some join with significant weaknesses in important literacy skills, including reading. However, inconsistencies in the overall quality of teaching and weaknesses in strategies for early intervention mean that not enough students, particularly boys and low-attaining students, are able to more rapidly close these gaps in achievement. Although leaders and managers have ensured a strong emphasis on whole-school approaches to improve students' literacy skills, it is too soon to see the impact of these initiatives. As a result of weaknesses in the support provided for those students in the early stages of reading, some low-attaining students are held back from making faster progress.
- The progress made by disabled students and students with special educational needs is similarly variable, although the curriculum makes a significant contribution to the achievement of many students. As a result of targeted intervention, achievement is also rising for those students supported through the Pupil Premium, particularly in English.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and students achieve well across a range of their courses, particularly in religious education, history and on vocational courses. Although many students enter the sixth form from below average starting points, an effective 'study skills' course supports them in meeting the demands of their General Certificate of Education programmes. The quality of advice and guidance provided is good and sixth-form students make a valued contribution to school life.
- A range of activities, provided through the curriculum and elsewhere, ensures a strong focus on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The assembly and tutorial programme makes a strong contribution to this and students are provided with effective opportunities to reflect and empathise with people from a wide range of faiths, cultures and communities across the world.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently effective in securing achievement that is at least good, particularly for boys, for low-attaining students and for some students with special educational needs.
- Nevertheless, the actions of leaders and managers have successfully addressed the need to strengthen weak teaching. For example, students' achievement in English is rising because stronger teaching in this subject has been secured; however, weaknesses in students' literacy skills continue to hold back overall achievement in English.
- Although recent initiatives to improve support for literacy across the curriculum are gathering momentum, it is too soon to see the impact of these strategies on improved levels of achievement. In addition, there is inconsistency in the effectiveness with which teachers deploy a range of techniques to improve students' literacy skills. Students also say they would welcome increased variety in the approaches used to support literacy in lessons.
- In the best lessons, teachers use assessment information well to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all the students in the class. Students are very clear about what they are learning and why and how they can improve their work. Through paired and small group work, students have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.

- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always adapt learning effectively; in some lessons, more-able students and those with special educational needs are provided with the same work to complete at the same pace. Teachers do not always ensure that they check on progress sufficiently during the lesson in order to adapt teaching or to move learning on more quickly. In some instances, questioning does not deepen students' thinking, or challenge students to provide more extended answers. Progress slows where students listen for too long to teacher input without engaging more actively or independently with their learning.
- The use of a range of intervention strategies is helping to raise attainment, particularly in Key Stage 4. Although leaders and managers recognise clearly the need to address the causes of underachievement as well as the symptoms, there is variability in the effectiveness of early intervention in support of students with weak literacy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are good; the school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and very little learning is disturbed by poor behaviour. Students respond well to the school's high expectations. They are welcoming and courteous to visitors and show pride in themselves and their school. Break and lunchtimes are characterised by a strong sense of students' self-management of their behaviour; staff supervision is good-humoured, unobtrusive and effective. Students say they feel very safe in school.
- The school places support for the well-being of students at the heart of its work. Effective efforts are made to raise the aspirations and expectations of all students, particularly in the sixth form. Students say that there are adults they can turn to who they trust if they have worries or concerns. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying and recognise the importance of the safe use of new technologies. Although a very small number of responses from parents indicated concerns regarding bullying, students say it is rare and that they are confident in the ability of staff at the school to deal with any issues promptly and effectively.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving; students' punctuality to school and to lessons is good and very little learning time is lost as students move around the school site. The rigorous monitoring of attendance and the prompt action taken to support students in attending school regularly are effective in ensuring that attendance continues to improve. Overall levels of exclusion from school are falling and the number of referrals to the school's inclusion facility is also declining.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has quickly secured the confidence and full support of staff. Morale is good and the senior team and middle leaders provide a strong drive for improvement. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and there is a clear and shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Improvements made to teaching, to the sixth form and to students' behaviour since the time of the previous inspection, together with a rising trend in attainment, all provide secure evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.
- The curriculum is good, including in the sixth form. It makes a significant contribution to students' achievement, to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is effective in providing equality of opportunity. The school reflects well on the effectiveness of its curriculum offer and takes prompt action where outcomes can be strengthened. For example, following a review of alternative provision, all students are now taught on the main school site. As a result, the achievement and attendance of a small number of

students at risk of underachievement or disaffection have improved.

- The leadership of teaching is good. Improvements in teaching are made from a fundamental and principled perspective and grounded in an evaluation of effective practice across the school. Good support has been provided through the work of the school's teaching and learning group and in collaboration with the local authority.
 - A comprehensive programme for the monitoring of teaching is in place. Senior leaders recognise clearly the importance of correlating the observation of teaching with evidence arising from a range of other sources, including through the scrutiny of students' work and the analysis of assessment information. As a result, the school has an increasingly secure understanding of those features of teaching that represent the typicality of students' experiences. However, although the monitoring of teaching is providing useful support for departmental improvement, it is not fully effective in providing clear points for improvement for individual teachers. In addition, urgent action is required to ensure that those students in the early stages of reading are enabled to access timely and up-to-date support to meet their needs.
 - Prompt and robust action is taken where weak teaching is identified and all teachers have appropriately challenging objectives as part of performance management and appraisal processes.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides valuable and effective support for leaders and managers. Governors are confident in holding the school to account for performance and have a good understanding of those aspects of the school's work requiring further improvement.
 - The governing body plays a significant role in the strategic management of the school, including in the effective use of resources and in ensuring best value for money. Governors are fully involved in ensuring staff and students' safety at school and, at the time of the inspection, all statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding were met.
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What inspection judgements mean

School

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112382
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401259

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	649
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Little
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	21-22 June 2010
Telephone number	01900 813434
Fax number	01900 814867
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